
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 52 Session of 2003

INTRODUCED BY ORIE, KUKOVICH, KITCHEN, O'PAKE, CONTI, COSTA,
CORMAN, GREENLEAF, KASUNIC, TARTAGLIONE, RHOADES, C. WILLIAMS
AND STACK, MARCH 24, 2003

REFERRED TO PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE, MARCH 24, 2003

A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing youth mental illness and suicide as a public health
2 crisis and encouraging evidence-based initiatives to screen
3 children and adolescents for mental disorders in order to
4 identify illness and prevent suicide among youths.

5 WHEREAS, Over the past 20 years, advances in scientific
6 research have changed the way we think about children's mental
7 health, and we have learned that the same mental disorders that
8 afflict adults can also occur in children and adolescents; and

9 WHEREAS, Scientific research has demonstrated that early
10 identification and treatment of mental disorders in children and
11 adolescents greatly improves the prognosis; and

12 WHEREAS, In January 2001 the Surgeon General of the United
13 States noted that while one in ten youths in the United States
14 suffers from mental illness severe enough to cause some level of
15 impairment, only one in five youths receives needed mental
16 health treatment; and

17 WHEREAS, The World Health Organization has reported that
18 youth neuropsychiatric disorders will rise by more than 50% by

1 2020, making these disorders one of the top five causes of
2 disability, morbidity and mortality among children and
3 adolescents; and

4 WHEREAS, Psychological autopsy studies have found that 90% of
5 youths who end their own lives have depression or other
6 diagnosable mental or substance abuse disorders at the time of
7 their deaths, verifying a link between mental illness and
8 suicide; and

9 WHEREAS, In 1999 the Surgeon General of the United States
10 first recognized that mental illness and substance abuse
11 disorders are the greatest risk factors for suicidal behavior
12 and that proper identification and treatment of mental illness
13 and substance abuse disorders are important suicide prevention
14 activities; and

15 WHEREAS, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has
16 reported that in 2000 suicide was the third leading cause of
17 death among youths 15 to 24 years of age; and

18 WHEREAS, The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
19 Administration has reported that in 1999 almost 3 million youths
20 were at risk for suicide but only 36% received mental health
21 treatment; and

22 WHEREAS, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has
23 reported that each year in the United States almost as many
24 adolescents and young adults commit suicide as die from all
25 natural causes, including leukemia, birth defects, pneumonia and
26 influenza and AIDS, combined; and

27 WHEREAS, In January 2001 the Surgeon General of the United
28 States issued a goal to improve the assessment and recognition
29 of mental health needs in children in part by promoting early
30 identification of mental health needs; and

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1 WHEREAS, Several states have recognized youth mental illness
2 and suicide as a public health crisis, and a majority of states
3 have developed or are in the process of developing plans to
4 identify mental illness and prevent suicide among youths; and

5 WHEREAS, The efforts, initiatives and activities of the
6 Federal and State Government should be used to support evidence-
7 based practices for identifying mental illness in youths and
8 preventing suicide among this population; therefore be it

9 RESOLVED, That the Senate find that youth mental illness and
10 suicide are a public health crisis and that the Governor, the
11 General Assembly, the Department of Health, the Department of
12 Education, the judiciary and all citizens of this Commonwealth
13 should make the identification of mental disorders and the
14 prevention of suicide among youths a public health priority; and
15 be it further

16 RESOLVED, That the Senate find that every child should be
17 screened for mental illness once in their youth in order to
18 identify mental illness and prevent suicide among youths and
19 that the screening and identification process should employ
20 evidence-based initiatives; and be it further

21 RESOLVED, That the Senate find that all middle school and
22 high school students should have equal access to these
23 initiatives without stigma.